

## **Guilt in marketing research: an elicitation-consumption perspective and research agenda**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Guilt regulates many consumption processes and, consequently, marketers use frequently appeals based on guilt to influence consumers' behaviour. Due to the multidisciplinary interest in this emotion, however, the literature is diverse and fragmented. The effectiveness of guilt appeals is contested and some authors suggest that the use of this emotion in marketing might be unethical. Furthermore research to date has not explored the potential relationships between the experience of guilt in consumption and the elicitation of this emotion through marketing appeals. This paper analyses existing research in guilt in marketing developing four specific contributions based on the evidence reviewed. First, we show under what circumstances feelings of guilt support consumer self-regulation processes. Second, we outline evidence-based managerial recommendations on how to produce effective guilt appeals and avoid the potentially unethical consequences of marketing through this emotion. Third, we identify a gap in existing theorizing and present an elicitation-consumption perspective of guilt in marketing as a framework that complements current approaches to this research topic. Fourth, we develop an agenda for future research and suggest eleven research hypotheses for the advancement of this field. Through the analysis of research produced within different disciplinary perspectives, this study develops a necessary foundation for future work on the role of guilt in marketing processes.

## Introduction

Emotions have always played an important role in marketing research (Copeland 1924; Holbrook and Batra 1987; McGarry 1958; Sternthal and Craig 1974; Udell 1965). Guilt especially has received significant attention both from practitioners (e.g. Hesz and Neophytou 2010; Roberts 2009) and academics (e.g. Bozinoff and Ghingold 1983; Cotte *et al.* 2005; Duhachek *et al.* 2012) and guilt appeals are used very often in differing marketing contexts (Huhmann and Brotherton 1997; Szmigin *et al.* 2011).

The academic literature, however, is fragmented and, to our knowledge, no attempt at reviewing the entire body of knowledge exists. Such fragmentation is partly explained by the bifurcation between guilt research in advertising and in consumer behaviour. The former sub-discipline evaluates the persuasiveness of guilt appeals (e.g. O'Keefe 2000; 2002) whilst consumer guilt research focuses instead on the experience of guilt (i.e. why do we feel guilty? what is the phenomenology of guilt?) and its role in regulating decision-making (e.g. Goldsmith *et al.* 2012; Soscia 2007). This tendency to compartmentalize the development of knowledge has led to many unresolved issues that have both conceptual and practical relevance. It is unclear, in the first place, whether eliciting guilt is an effective marketing communications tool. Some argue for its effectiveness (e.g. Lindsey *et al.* 2007) while others warn against its use (e.g. Brennan and Binney 2010). It is also not clear under what circumstances using guilt is ethically acceptable. Some scholars have questioned the ethicality of marketing campaigns based on negative emotions altogether since they purportedly reduce individual independence (Beauchamp 1988), are perceived as manipulative (Arthur and Quester 2003) and can generate anxiety in certain audiences (Hyman and Tansey 1990). Nonetheless, while analyses of the ethical risks associated with fear are available in the literature (Hastings *et al.* 2004), no review to our knowledge provides a summary of the risks associated with the use of guilt which is grounded in empirical

evidence (rather than normative arguments). Finally, research lacks a clear understanding of how the experience of guilt elicited by marketing appeals interacts with the same emotion experienced during consumption decisions. Psychological insights suggest that past memories of guilt influence how this emotion is processed at subsequent times (Baumeister *et al.* 2007; Philippe *et al.* 2011), but this topic has not been investigated in previous research.

In this paper, we present a comprehensive literature review on guilt in marketing that seeks to build connections between work produced within different academic disciplines in order to address these outstanding issues. We examine to what extent and under what circumstances the elicitation of guilt can be considered an effective marketing tool. In order to account for the current gap in the understanding of how elicited-guilt influences (or is influenced by) guilt experienced during consumption decisions, we introduce an elicitation-consumption perspective aimed at linking how guilt messages are produced by organizations with the experience of the same emotion during consumption choices. We outline clear managerial implications and discuss ethical issues on the basis of the evidence. Finally, the paper identifies areas of further research and presents eleven associated research hypotheses for scholars to investigate in future.

The article is structured as follows. Firstly, we summarise the approach adopted to develop this literature review. Subsequently, we define guilt and outline its fundamental characteristics. In the review of the literature we summarise evidence on the role of guilt in marketing. This is followed by a discussion where we: 1) present a summary of the findings, 2) introduce an elicitation-consumption perspective that helps to investigate the interplay between emotional experiences elicited during the communication process and emotions experienced in consumption, 3) outline the relevant managerial implications that emerge from the review, and 4) discuss the ethical issues raised by the evidence analysed. We conclude

with a research agenda which includes research questions and research hypotheses that inform future scholarship in this field.

### **Approach to the review**

Research on guilt spans the social sciences. Our goal is to review papers on the role of guilt in a marketing context. Consequently, we analyse all the articles published in major marketing journals identified through searches on *EBSCO Business Source Complete* and other electronic databases. We identified 88 papers across many leading academic journals in the field including the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Marketing Letters*, *Psychology & Marketing*, *Advances in Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and the *Journal of Business Ethics*. From the analysis of these papers, we identified other publications that, although not published in marketing journals, present evidence relevant to consumption and marketing. This leads to a total of 109 publications which represent the core of the empirical findings reviewed in this manuscript.

A third phase of the research project involved reviewing research outside marketing to identify potential gaps and flaws in the scholarship. This involved reviewing a significant amount of work (86 records including both academic articles and books) in other areas of the social sciences. This stage ended when we reached theoretical saturation (i.e. no new insights were uncovered in subsequent reading of papers) (Bowen 2008).

## Defining guilt

Scholars have debated the features of guilt for decades (Leary 2007; Parrott 2004; Tangney and Dearing 2002; Wolf *et al.* 2011; Zeelenberg and Breugelmans 2008). Appraisal theory suggests that emotional experiences are not absolute. What define emotions are the patterns of appraisals associated with discrete emotional reactions (Roseman 1991; Roseman *et al.* 1994). From this perspective, three key considerations arise when defining guilt.

First, guilt is a key emotion in self-regulation processes (Eisenberg 2000; Haidt, 2003; Vohs *et al.* 2008). Guilt is an outcome of self-regulation failures (Zemack-Rugar *et al.* 2012) and, in turn, provides the motivation to control behaviour and self-regulate (Baumeister *et al.* 1995). Despite this association with self-control, scholars have found that guilty feelings do not always arise from the perception of having intentionally caused some negative consequence. A general feeling of responsibility for an outcome or wrongdoing (Tracy and Robins 2007; Zimmerman *et al.* 2011) as well as the association with others responsible for immoral behaviour, are sufficient to experience guilt (Doosje *et al.* 1998).

Second, it is possible to differentiate between guilt as a state and guilt as a trait (Cohen *et al.* 2011; Kugler and Jones 1992; Tangney and Dearing 2002). In this paper, we focus on guilt as an emotional state since this is the perspective that is of direct interest to marketers.

Third, guilt is closely related to another negative emotion: shame. Although the two words are used interchangeably in English-speaking countries (Edelstein and Shaver 2007), researchers have explored the differences between them. Two schools of thought have emerged. The first, with its roots in early anthropology (Benedict 1946), differentiates between transgressions that are publicly exposed or only experienced privately (Cohen *et al.* 2011). The former would elicit feelings of shame while the latter would lead to guilt. The alternative perspective differentiates between focusing attention on the behaviour (“I have

done something bad”), which would lead to feelings of guilt, or concentrating on the self (“I am a bad person”), which would lead to feelings of shame (Lewis 1971; Tangney *et al.* 1998; Tangney and Dearing 2002; Tracy and Robins 2004). Table 1 identifies the marketing studies that have adopted either one of these two conceptualizations.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Despite the different approaches available in the literature we can identify several key features of guilt. First, guilt is determined by advanced cognitive processes that require an individual to either simulate alternative courses of behaviour or remember and appraise past actions (Carver and Scheier 1998; Tracy and Robins 2007). For this reason guilt is experienced only in children above a certain age (Lagattuta and Thompson 2007). Furthermore, although internal causality is not necessary to experience guilt, individuals need to be able to construe an association between the self and certain negative outcomes in order to experience this emotion (Doosje *et al.*, 1998). These two characteristics are shared by guilt and shame but differentiate them from other basic negative emotions such as sadness and anger (Ekman 1992; Tracy and Robins 2007).

Although feelings of guilt and shame to a certain extent tend to coexist (Tangney and Dearing 2002), since both emotions are experienced when attentional focus is directed towards the self and when information threatening to self-esteem is available (Tracy and Robins 2006; 2007), there are two features that help differentiate between the two emotions. First, there is substantial evidence that shame is prevalent when failures are publicly exposed whilst guilt is an emotion caused by private appraisals (Cohen *et al.* 2011; Combs *et al.* 2010; Smith *et al.*

2002). This does not concern the nature of the wrongdoing, that can involve both behaviours considered personally and/or socially negative, but exclusively the nature of the appraisal (Cohen *et al.* 2011). Second, guilt is more likely to be associated with a threat to self-identity goals rather than self-identity traits. This means that *ceteris paribus* shame is more likely to be associated with the perception that there is something wrong or negative with stable personal characteristics while guilt is more contextually based and linked to a specific behaviour (Tangney *et al.* 2007).

Given the above, we define guilt as *a negative emotional state experienced by an individual remembering or imagining privately that he or she is associated with an outcome deemed socially or personally negative and threatening to his or her self-identity goals.*

### **Guilt in marketing: the evidence**

The review of existing research is organized in four different sections. First, we review evidence on the appraisals that lead to guilt. Second, we discuss evidence on what characterizes guilt experiences. Third, we analyse the consequences of guilt in marketing and consumer behaviour. Finally, we review evidence on the moderators of guilt in marketing, outlining the influence that several constructs have on consumers' experiences of this emotion and on the consequences of guilt. Although our focus is primarily on guilt as a marketing communications' tool, throughout the literature review we seek, as far as this is possible, to connect evidence from how guilt influences consumption choices with research on this emotion in the advertising literature.



### *Appraisals of guilt in marketing*

Since guilt is an emotion that requires specific cognitive faculties (Lagattuta and Thompson 2007), marketing scholars have tended to conflate guilt's emotional appraisals with the causes of this emotion (Soscia 2007; Watson and Spence 2007). Appraisals, however, are best described not as causal antecedents of the emotional experience but as cognitive processes that tend to co-exist with it; patterns of cognitions that arise with and partly characterize the emotion itself (Frijda 1993; Parkinson and Manstead 1993; Roseman 1991; Tong 2010). Nonetheless, from a marketing perspective, the idea that certain cognitions can cause guilt is both practically and theoretically meaningful because it allows for the designing of different messages which cause emotional reactions in consumers (Bagozzi *et al.* 1999; Soscia, 2007).

In marketing, guilt can arise both as a consequence of communications aimed at its elicitation, as well as from social interactions and a multitude of individual consumption choices. Evidence shows, however, that there is consistency in the appraisals associated with guilt across different marketing contexts. Agency and the perception of a negative outcome are prerequisites in the experience of guilt (Soscia 2007; Watson and Spence 2007). The importance of these appraisals is supported by a vast array of evidence collected across different research contexts. Burnett and Lunsford (1994) list various types of purchase situations which elicit this emotion and differentiate between: 1) financial guilt; 2) health guilt; 3) moral guilt and 4) social responsibility guilt. Dahl *et al.* (2003) identify three broad dimensions of guilt: 1) guilt related to oneself, 2) guilt related to societal standards and 3) guilt related to others. The first group of the latter classification contains examples of consumption that contravene a personal goal; characterised by the fact that the behaviour has not lived up to the ideal self. The discriminant feature of the second category is that a social norm has been violated. Finally, interpersonal guilt is based on the realisation that one's

behaviour can affect others negatively. We can distinguish further each dimension between: guilt caused by action (i.e. doing something wrong) and guilt caused by inaction (i.e. failing to do something good).

This evidence has driven a focus on guilt as the primary emotion in consumer self-regulation. A significant amount of work substantiates the classification first introduced by Dahl *et al.* (2003) as demonstrated by Table 2. Guilt related to the self includes research on impulse buying (Cole and Sherrell 1995). Choosing hedonic features over functional features also creates feelings of guilt (Chitturi *et al.* 2007; Kivetz and Simonson 2002). These appraisals are based on self-reflection that takes place after the behaviour (Baumeister *et al.* 2007). In other circumstances, however, guilt can be caused simply by mental simulations that imply the possibility of doing something wrong (Carver and Scheier, 1998). For example, consumers feel guilty when considering eating unhealthy foods (Durkin *et al.* 2012; Rozin *et al.* 1999) or buying products that are not environmentally friendly (Carrus *et al.* 2008; Gregory-Smith *et al.* 2013). Finally, few studies analyse guilt in consumption decisions that involve social relationships. Consumers can experience guilt towards a salesperson if they believe they have a relationship with this individual (Dahl *et al.* 2005). Research has analysed how parents can experience guilt towards their children in a number of different situations that vary from the ability to save financial resources to spend on their well-being (Soman and Cheema 2011), the decision to avoid buying convenience food that might be unhealthy and show low levels of care (Carrigan and Szmigin 2006) and the choice to dispose of their children's old or unused possessions (Phillips and Sego 2011).

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Although there is no marketing research on this point, the memory of guilt appeals could also influence the emotional appraisals during consumption. This is consistent with Baumeister *et al.*'s (2007) feedback theory that illustrates how the memory of past emotions is an integral feature of human learning in social interactions. Such process should be especially important for guilt since negative experiences are more strongly remembered (Baumeister *et al.* 2001; McGaugh 2000, 2002). Strong memories would facilitate the appraisal process, increasing the ability to simulate potential outcomes of different options (Gollwitzer 1999). Such simulation is a prerequisite for the anticipation of feelings of guilt that can influence behaviour (Szpunar 2010).

Existing evidence suggests also that appraisals of fairness and justice contribute to experiences of guilt. Some authors propose the idea of existential guilt, caused by the perception of a difference between one's well-being and the plight of others (Cotte *et al.* 2005; Lascu 1991). This form of guilt centres around perceptions of unfairness/injustice (Rawlings 1970) and the interpersonal characteristics of this emotion (Baumeister *et al.* 1995; Zeelenberg and Breugelmans 2008). Individuals can also feel guilty at unfairly obtaining positive outcomes (Gelbrich 2011).

Marketers can, therefore, activate guilt by encouraging one or more of these appraisals. Furthermore, a mix of different emotions will be experienced by consumers exposed to any ad. The closeness between guilt and shame, for example, means that, even when advertisers tap into the specific appraisal dimensions of guilt, a certain amount of shame may be also generated (see, for example, Bennett 1998 and Boudewyns *et al.* 2013).

### *Guilt experiences in marketing*

Depending on the combination of cognitions activated in the marketing message different types of guilt experiences can be elicited. Marketers differentiate between two different forms of guilt: *anticipatory* and *reactive* guilt (Cotte *et al.* 2005; Izard 1977; Lascu 1991; Rawlings 1970). Anticipatory guilt, also called *reflective* guilt (Janis 1969) or more commonly *anticipated* guilt (Lindsey 2005; Steenhaut and Van Kenhove 2006), is experienced when a potential negative outcome, that might be generated in the future, is considered by the individual. Reactive guilt, also named by some commentators as *consequential* guilt (Tangney *et al.* 2007), is experienced as the consequence of an action that has happened in the past and has created a negative consequence. Both forms of guilt can be elicited through guilt appeals (Huhmann and Brotherton 1997) depending on whether the message is framed around a negative past event or the anticipation of a potential negative outcome (for examples of different messages using these frames, see Cotte *et al.* 2005).

Consumer research has explored how guilt is experienced in numerous different contexts. Guilt experiences are characterized consistently, depending on the circumstances, by a sense of being in the wrong and the desire to undo certain actions, make up for past mistakes, apologise and punish oneself for the wrongdoing (Roseman *et al.* 1994; Tangney *et al.* 2007). In many consumption situations, however, consumers experience contextually the pleasure of consumption and the guilty feelings caused by the perception of not resisting temptation. This is a common feature of research that studies guilt especially in food consumption (Mishra and Mishra 2011; Mohr *et al.* 2012; Rozin *et al.* 1999) and impulsive buying (Cole and Sherrell 1995; Piron 1993; Rook and Hoch 1985; Rook 1987). The association between guilt and pleasure is so strong that Goldsmith *et al.* (2012) show that when consumers are primed with guilt they experience even more pleasure from hedonic consumption.

This highlights an interesting difference between experiences of guilt that are elicited during the communication process and experiences that are felt by individuals in consumption episodes. During the communication process guilt experiences might be associated with other negative emotions (e.g. Passyn and Sujon 2006; Boudewyns *et al.* 2013) but they do not tend to coexist with positive emotions as it is often the case in consumption.

### *Consequences of guilt*

Guilt appeals are usually structured in two parts: “one is material designed to evoke some degree of guilt in the message receiver, and the other is the message’s represented viewpoint or action, which presumably might offer the prospect of guilt reduction” (O’Keefe 2000; p. 80). This process can generate three potential consequences. Firstly, guilt can facilitate learning and cognitive persuasion. This is achieved through the extraction of if-then rules of behaviour (Gollwitzer 1999) or the suggestion to engage in counterfactual thinking (Roese 1997), which are often associated with the feedback embedded in guilt experiences (Baumeister *et al.* 2007). Secondly, the repeated exposure to ads that elicit negative emotions can create an automatic affective association leading to aversion to a certain consumption situation or product (Aarts *et al.* 2007; Damasio 1994). Through a process of evaluative conditioning (Jones *et al.* 2010), the constant association of a negative emotion with certain behaviour will determine an affective negative residue which is immediately triggered without the need for cognition (De Houwer *et al.* 2001). This is consistent with research showing that the valence of an emotion will influence decision-making (Bower 1981; Forgas 1995) and that negative emotions are more likely to create critical, adverse attitudes (Clore and Storbeck 2006; Forgas 1995; 2002). This means that the use of guilt over time could create negative associations and negative attitudes towards the overall object or category

represented in the communications. Other potential outcomes of a negative emotional experience, according to stress theory (Lazarus and Folkman 1984), are *emotion-focused coping* or *problem-focused coping*. The former indicates a coping approach that focuses on regulating the negative emotion in order to restore the internal imbalance (Gross, 1998). This might include arguing against the message presented (Coulter and Pinto 1995; Hass and Linder 1972; Hovland *et al.* 1953) or creating rationales to justify the self (Bray *et al.* 2011; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2006). Problem-focused coping includes instead all the actions that try to deal with the source of the negative emotional experience. In the case of guilt this includes changing personal behaviour or redressing past wrongdoing (Tangney and Dearing 2002; Tangney *et al.* 2007).

There is mixed evidence on the effectiveness of guilt appeals. Marketing messages based on strong feelings of guilt are likely to engender counter-arguing (Bozinoff and Ghingold 1983; Coulter and Pinto 1995; Ghingold and Bozinoff 1982) and are less persuasive than feelings of guilt generated by social transgressions (O’Keefe 2000; 2002). Persuasion researchers often talk of an ‘inverted-U’ relationship between guilt and persuasion effects (Chang 2011; Hibbert *et al.* 2007), but this phenomenon is not an issue in research on guilt in social life where stronger feelings of guilt lead to more significant changes in behaviour (O’Keefe 2000; 2002). Consumers are also able to rationalize guilt messages, protecting the self without changing their behaviour (Bray *et al.* 2011; Brennan and Binney 2010; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2006). Furthermore, during the communication process consumers can rarely deal with the problem presented, and in most cases they can only be cognitively persuaded by the message but cannot immediately change their behaviour. The evidence suggests therefore that emotion-focused coping often hampers the impact of guilt appeals.

On the other hand, evidence from the consumer behaviour literature suggests that guilt is a powerful emotion in regulating individual behaviour and facilitating problem-focused coping.

Table 3 summarises the key studies on the basis of the type of behavioural self-regulation explored. Guilt caused by impulse buying activates problem-focused coping that allows developing a plan on how to avoid the same outcome in subsequent episodes (Yi and Baumgartner 2011). Anticipating feelings of guilt reduces consumption of unhealthy foods (Durkin *et al.* 2012; Mishra and Mishra 2011; Mohr *et al.* 2012; Rozin *et al.* 1999) and favours consumption of healthier alternatives (Cornish 2012). This emotion can therefore be considered as a segmentation variable in food markets (Olsen *et al.* 2009). Anticipating guilt also contributes to financial prudence and increasing saving (Soman and Cheema 2011). Moreover, anticipated guilt in relation to societal standards influences boycotting decisions (Braunsberger and Buckler 2011; Klein *et al.* 2004) and environmentally-responsible consumption choices (Carrus *et al.* 2008; Gregory-Smith *et al.* 2013; Grob 1995; Kaiser 2006; Pelozo *et al.* 2013). It also decreases the likelihood that consumers will unfairly take advantage of firms and behave in morally questionable ways (Steenhaut and Van Kenhove 2005; 2006). Finally, guilt towards a salesperson leads to a desire to engage in positive reparatory action (Dahl *et al.* 2005). Guilt is not directed at the corporate entity but to the person with whom the consumer is interacting (Dahl *et al.* 2005; Menon and Dubé 1999). Research has also shown that guilt towards one's own children influences the desire to save financial resources to spend on their well-being (Soman and Cheema 2011).

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

### *Moderators influencing guilt in marketing*

The literature has identified a number of moderating variables that influence the experience of guilt and the impact of this emotion on consumption behaviour. On the basis of existing research, we classify moderators at the 1) individual level, 2) contextual level, and 3) appeal level. For each group of moderators, we also identify the differential impact on guilt experiences and on the consequences of guilt whenever this level of detail is available in the original publication. A summary of all potential moderating variables that have been explored to date is presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6 for individual, contextual and appeal level moderators respectively.

Individual moderating variables influence the communication because processing of the marketing message will be affected by pre-existing beliefs, traits and other personal circumstances. Messages eliciting guilt will be more effective in generating the intended emotional reaction in the audience when individuals have positive attitudes towards the focus of the campaign (Chang 2012; Hibbert *et al.* 2007), show high levels of perceived self- and response-efficacy (Lindsey 2005; Lindsey *et al.* 2007; Basil *et al.* 2008), and perceive strong personal or social norms coherent with the message (Basil *et al.* 2006). Individuals who instead disagree strongly with the message (Ghingold and Bozinoff 1982; Bozinoff and Ghingold 1983; O’Keefe 2000; 2002) or are sceptical towards advertising in general (Hibbert *et al.* 2007) are more likely to try to resist the guilt appeal.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE



There are also individual level moderating variables whose impact depends on the nature of the campaign. Block (2005) finds that individuals with independent self-construal are more influenced by guilt communications that make direct reference to the self. On the other hand, Kim and Johnson (2013) find that guilt, in the context of a cause-related marketing campaign, is more effective in consumers with highly interdependent self-construal. Materialism is also a variable whose impact will vary with the circumstances, although evidence suggests that highly materialistic individuals will feel guiltier when thinking about instances of hedonic consumption (Fitzmaurice 2008). Cultural dimensions are also important in the experience of guilt (Hofstede 2003; Wong and Tsai 2007) despite the limited amount of evidence available to date (Kim and Johnson 2013).

The effectiveness of guilt appeals depends also on the specific research context. To date only a few contextual moderating variables have been explored. Research suggests that associations with luxury/hedonic experiences trigger feelings of guilt while the suggestion of an increased effort reduces such feelings (Chitturi *et al.* 2007; Kivetz and Simonson 2002; Lee-Wingate and Corfman 2010). At the same time, appeals to help/benefit others trigger guilty feelings (Agrawal and Duhachek 2010; Fisher *et al.* 2008) while the indication that others are benefiting from one's actions assuage this emotion (Lee-Wingate and Corfman 2010). Furthermore, if consumers are already experiencing unrelated feelings of guilt when they are exposed to appeals eliciting this same emotion, they are more likely to react negatively, rationalising integral feelings of guilt and engaging in emotion-focused coping (Agrawal and Duhachek 2010). Pre-existing relationships with others can reinforce guilt, either through a focus on the interpersonal dynamics (Dahl *et al.* 2005) or through a reminder of personal responsibility (Basil *et al.* 2006). Recently, Peloza *et al.* (2013) have also demonstrated that the contextual activation of self-accountability influences the anticipation of feelings of guilt and leads to self-regulation in consumer behaviour. Finally, in the context

of food consumption, low-fat labels and nutritional information can have negative self-regulatory effects because they tend to reduce anticipated guilt feelings (Mishra and Mishra 2011; Mohr *et al.* 2012).

INSERT TABLE 5 HERE

Research has identified features of the marketing messages that impact upon the elicitation of feelings of guilt and their effectiveness in influencing individual choices. Depending on the context, effective appeals should 1) present issues as very close to the target audience (Chang 2012), 2) stress the elements of threat or benefit for others (Fisher *et al.* 2008; Lindsey 2005), 3) frame the individual as responsible for others' suffering (Agrawal and Duhacheck 2010), 4) include reference to potential advantages that the individual could obtain from behavioural change (Duhacheck *et al.* 2012) and 5) reinforce ambivalence in attitudes to strengthen guilt feelings (Durkin *et al.* 2012). Research also shows that appeals that are moderate in intensity but highly credible and not perceived as manipulative are more likely to influence attitudes and behaviours (Coulter and Pinto 1995; O'Keefe 2000; 2002). Finally, although there is still very limited research on how effective messages that mix different emotions can be developed, Passyn and Sujun (2006) show that fear and guilt can complement one another effectively. This is because guilt increases the perceived sense of self-accountability mitigating the potential desire to deny responsibility which is induced by fear.

INSERT TABLE 6 HERE

## **Discussion**

### *Summary of the review*

Throughout the literature review we have analysed both evidence from advertising research and evidence from consumer research. This means that we can identify two different times and types of situations where guilt can be experienced in a marketing context: Time Y where guilt is elicited through communication and Time X where guilt is the outcome of consumption events. The evidence reviewed, however, suggests that, irrespective of whether guilt is triggered by a consumption episode or elicited through marketing communications, the main components of the emotional process remain unchanged. In summary the findings reviewed shows that at both hypothetical times we can examine guilt in terms of 1) appraisal processes associated with the emotion, 2) experienced guilt, and 3) consequences of the emotional experience. Figure 1 in Appendix 1 represents a summary of the literature. Consistent with that discussed above, the summary depicts the relationships between appraisals and guilt experiences in terms of association (rather than direct causation) and identifies the moderating effects on a) the experience of guilt and b) the consequences generated by this emotion.

This analysis also helps highlighting an existing gap in current research. One obvious consequence of the disciplinary divide between guilt in the persuasion literature and the study of guilt in consumer behaviour is the absence of research looking at the interaction between the two. Our literature review shows that no marketing publication to date has looked at the relationships between feelings of guilt experienced during exposure to marketing communications and guilt felt by consumers when they are making consumption decisions. The opposite is also true: no research exists examining how feelings of guilt experienced when consumers buy or use an offering interact with the processing of guilt appeals

communicated by marketers. To advance theoretical debates, we suggest next an elicitation-consumption perspective that can support the development of future research in this area.

### *An elicitation-consumption perspective of guilt in marketing*

An elicitation-consumption perspective to guilt in marketing recognizes the need to study more closely the interactions between guilt experiences that are elicited through marketing communications and guilt experiences that happen (either planned or unplanned by marketers) as part of consumption choices. This approach requires the analysis of how the memory of a marketing message based on guilt influences the experience of guilt in a certain consumption context (or vice versa examining how consumption-guilt influences elicited-guilt). The absence of marketing research in this field is not surprising since the literature in social-psychology has also largely ignored the study of how memory of past events influences emotional experiences (Philippe *et al.* 2011; Philippe *et al.* 2013).

If we adopt an elicitation-consumption perspective to analyse the evidence reviewed here, we can identify four different pathways that characterize the relationship between guilt-elicitation and guilt in consumption situations. These are detailed in Table 7. An *integrated* pathway implies a direct linear relationship between the elicitation and consumption phases. This would be the ideal situation for marketers: the campaign directly influences the decisions made by consumers. This is however only one of the potential pathways that consumers might experience. There could be also the case of what we term *conditioned* guilt, when guilty feelings in a consumption situation will influence the appraisal of marketing communications based on guilt. There will also be cases when guilt is experienced during the communication but there is no guilt in the consumption situation (*lapsed* guilt). Finally,

consumers could experience guilt in a consumption situation but the appeal might not be able to elicit the emotion intended (*resisted* guilt).

INSERT TABLE 7 HERE

To further clarify our analysis, we can translate these different pathways into three frameworks that outline the relationships between the different hypothetical times of elicitation and consumption, and integrate this with the evidence reviewed in the rest of the paper. Figure 2 (displayed in Appendix 2) shows how research has examined guilt in the past: guilt-elicitation and guilt-consumption are modelled as completely independent processes (see for example O’Keefe 2000). The framework could represent both the cases of *lapsed* and *resisted* guilt: there is no clear temporal relationship between consumption and communication.

In the case of *integrated* guilt, represented in Figure 3 (Appendix 2), the appeal has an influence on the consumption phase which chronologically follows the exposure to the marketing campaign. Specifically, the *integrated* pathway draws the attention of scholars to the analysis of three important feedback processes (Baumeister *et al.* 2007): 1) how repeated exposure to guilt appeals influence the appraisal of marketing messages that elicit guilt, 2) how exposure to guilt appeals influence the appraisal of guilt in a subsequent consumption situation, 3) how the experience of guilt in a consumption situation influences appraisals after the subsequent exposure to a guilt message. The study of these feedback loops represents areas for further research in the study of guilt in marketing.

A similar observation can be drawn from the analysis of the *conditioned* pathway, summarised in Figure 4 (Appendix 2). Here the focus is on the analysis of how the experience of guilt in consumption situations affects the decoding and processing of guilt

appeals. This pathway represents an additional research context that marketers should analyse because of its practical relevance in the development of effective marketing communications based on guilt.

These four different pathways require different types of interventions from marketers. In the case of integrated and conditioned guilt, the focus of attention should be the optimization of the feedback between elicitation and consumption. Marketers need to ensure that appeals based on guilt are aligned with individuals' experience of this emotion in their consumption decisions. When feelings of guilt lapse and do not influence the consumption situation, marketers should focus on reinforcing contextual cues that can elicit guilt during the consumption decision. If instead the problem is the inability to elicit guilt in the communication process, marketers should examine weaknesses in their own message that might elicit counter-arguing (Coulter and Pinto 1995) and neutralization (Bray *et al.* 2010; Sykes and Matza 1957) in consumers.

### *Managerial implications*

Our review of the evidence raises important implications for marketers using guilt in their campaigns. We specifically identify implications that relate to the type of experience marketers wish to design and the consequences of guilt for consumers' decisions.

In relation to the type of guilt experiences marketers plan to elicit, managers should differentiate between the assumptions made by campaigns that use anticipated or reactive guilt. In both cases, the guilt appeal's effectiveness rests on consumers' awareness of the self-regulation failure and on their attribution of the causes of the inability to self-regulate (Tracy and Robins 2004). In the case of reactive guilt, however, the cognitive underpinnings of the emotional experience are based on a specific failure that at the time  $t=0$  precedes the

exposure to the marketing appeal and will influence the decoding of the message. In the case of anticipated guilt the failure is only hypothetical and it takes place at a time  $t=y$  which does not necessarily come before (i.e. could be simultaneous to) the decoding of the guilt appeal. Figure 5 in Appendix 3 summarises these differences between reactive guilt and anticipated guilt campaigns. This means that for appeals based on anticipated guilt to be effective, awareness and attribution of key outcomes to the self must be well-established in the market. For example, NGOs and environmental organizations often use guilt appeals in campaigns about global warming (see Figure 6 in Appendix 3). However, since this remains a debated and controversial issue (e.g. Lefsrud and Meyer 2012), it is likely that feelings of guilt will be generated only in a limited group of consumers. It would be easier to elicit guilt in relation to more uncontroversial environmental issues where consumers have higher awareness of the problem and can construe more easily their personal responsibility.

Furthermore, since anticipated guilt rests on potential negative outcomes, it is easier to neutralise this emotion while reactive guilt, because of its roots in personal experiences, is more likely to influence behaviour. Adverts using reactive guilt (an example is presented in Figure 7 in Appendix 3) leverage the ability of members of the target audience to identify with the concerns presented. This facilitates the activation of feelings of guilt associated with past behaviour.

The evidence reviewed also raises managerial implications in relation to the potential consequences of guilt. We have discussed how, while guilt appeals are often discounted by consumers through counter-arguing and neutralization, guilt remains a very powerful emotion in the regulation of consumer behaviour. The implication for marketers is how to elicit feelings of guilt in the same context that behavioural regulation takes place. This is not often possible: in most cases there is a temporal difference between the elicitation of guilt through marketing communications aimed at influencing certain behaviour and the natural occurrence

of circumstances where the target behaviour can take place. Nonetheless marketers are sometimes in a position to induce feelings of guilt that co-occur with the behaviour being targeted. For example, the UK Department for Transport ran a campaign aimed at reminding drivers of the importance of speed limits (see Figure 8 in Appendix 3). The campaign ran on different media, including radio. As many people listen to the radio while driving (RAJAR 2013), the campaign can immediately activate problem-focused coping.

This type of approach allows the conflation of guilt elicitation and consumption, potentially activating persuasion and behavioural change simultaneously (see Figure 9 in Appendix 3). Although in our review we have not found any study where this effect was tested in comparison to a more indirect persuasion and behavioural change dynamic, the psychological evidence leads us to propose that *ceteris paribus* this approach will be more effective in creating behavioural change. The implication for marketers is to assess their planning alternatives taking into consideration the possibility of developing campaigns that concurrently change behaviours and consumer attitudes on a certain topic.

#### *Ethical implications and potentially unexpected consequences of guilt in marketing*

Our literature review identifies ethical implications pertaining to the use of guilt appeals in marketing campaigns. This analysis complements normative accounts available in the literature with an evidence-based discussion of the potential unexpected consequences that could be generated by guilt appeals.

The evidence reviewed on appraisal processes of guilt in marketing suggests important ethical implications for marketers using this emotion in their campaigns. Research has shown that emotional appraisals influence judgments whether they are integral or not to the



emotional experience (Han *et al.* 2007; Lerner and Keltner 2000; Pham 2004; Pham 2007). As mentioned above guilt is associated with appraisals of personal agency and negative outcomes. This means that guilt messages stress perceptions of responsibility (Berndsen and Manstead 2007; Roseman *et al.* 1994) and negativity of the outcomes experienced. This might make guilt appeals deceptive or might create undue anxiety in the target audience. The first problem arises when the psychological process which amplifies perceptions of responsibility is accompanied by messages that are unrealistic in portraying the potential outcomes of the offering advertised. The second issue is related to messages that exceed in portraying the responsibility of the target audience and can therefore create too much pressure for the consumer (Hyman and Tansey 1990).

There are also ethical considerations pertaining to the experiences of guilt that marketers might elicit in their target audience. The use of reactive guilt reminds consumers of their past failures. This might be problematic for two reasons. First, in certain circumstances it might be deemed unethical as it could cause excessive distress for the audience. Second, it could engender a negative reaction from consumers leading to derogation of the source of the message, especially if consumers perceive a manipulative intent (Hass and Linder 1972; Hibbert *et al.* 2007; O’Keefe 2000). An additional risk is not linked to guilt itself but stems from the advertisers’ common misunderstanding of the subtle differences between guilt and shame experiences (see Boudewyns *et al.* 2013). The latter is an emotion whose darker side has been widely reported in psychology (Tangney 1999; Treeby and Bruno 2012). Consequently, marketers should be careful in distinguishing between the two emotional reactions and as much as possible aim at developing, through the best practices that have been described in the literature (e.g. Hyman and Tansey 1990; Boudewyns *et al.* 2013), campaigns that, while eliciting guilt, are free from the elements of reduced self-esteem and self-threat which are often associated with shame experiences (De Hooe *et al.* 2011).

The analysis of the empirical evidence on the consequences that experiences of guilt can generate should also lead marketers to reflect on an important ethical warning associated with the use of guilt appeals. We have shown that the repeated exposure to guilt appeals in relation to a product might generate feelings of aversion and dislike for the whole category. If this arguably might not be a problem in anti-tobacco campaigns for example, it might nevertheless become questionable when guilt is used in the promotion of healthy eating. Social marketers might want to reduce consumption of high-calorie food but the choice to do so by creating an implicit negative association with certain types of food could be ethically questionable.

### **Agenda for future research**

Our review of guilt in marketing research offers the opportunity to identify a number of key themes that deserve the attention of scholars in future research. We present in Table 8 details of research questions and research hypotheses that can guide future investigations. We also list key references that might be useful for scholars wishing to explore further each of the themes mentioned. We conclude by suggesting two additional areas of research that deserve attention although they are not amenable, at this stage of research, to hypotheses testing.

Adopting an elicitation-consumption perspective to the study of guilt requires the direction of more attention to the analysis of how memories of past guilt experiences influence this emotion in marketplace decision-making. The analysis of feedback between experiences of guilt at different times has been to date neglected by marketers and psychologists. Existing evidence, nonetheless, suggests two main arguments that inform the research hypotheses presented. First, we know that consumers learn rules of behaviours from past guilt experiences (Baumeister *et al.* 2007). This constantly revised learning process should imply

that past instances of guilt experiences moderate future ones and increase further the desire to repair the wrong-doing (Amodio *et al.* 2007; Baumeister *et al.* 2007). Second, recent research on how episodic memories influence emotions (Philippe *et al.* 2011; Philippe *et al.* 2013) shows that 1) memories play a significant role in driving emotional states, 2) memories are able to predict feelings when the environmental triggers of emotions involve the same underlying themes such as, for example, the same motivational needs (Deci and Ryan 2000). For example, Philippe *et al.* (2011, study 2) show that the memory of having being treated unjustly predicts future anger reactions in a later, unrelated episode whereas other memories (i.e. having committed an error) do not drive anger under the same environmental conditions. On the basis of this evidence we predict that 1) memories of past guilt experiences reinforce the influence of guilt in marketing contexts when environmental cues match the content of memory networks (H1 and H2); 2) guilt appeals based on themes that can be easily recalled by consumers and/or tap into autobiographical experiences (see also Baumgartner *et al.* 1992) will be more memorable and effective (H3 and H4).

Scholars can also investigate the ability of different approaches to framing guilt appeals to produce different experiences of guilt. There has been only limited research on how group dynamics influence guilty feelings in a marketing context. We know that guilt is caused by the perception that our behaviour has harmed others (Agrawal and Duhachek 2010; Tangney and Dearing 2002). Research, however, has not investigated whether categorizing victims as members of an in-group versus members of an out-group could influence emotional and behavioural processes (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Tajfel 1982). Some have hypothesised a functionalist theory of guilt based on the need to care for the group (Gilbert 2003; 2007). From a marketing perspective, if guilt is an emotion associated with care for the in-group, we would expect appeals that frame the victims of a certain behaviour as members of the in-

group to be more effective than appeals where the victims are members of the out-group or not clearly defined in terms of their group identity (H5).

Moreover, although research to date has explored several important appraisals that characterize guilt, there is still room for further research to extend our knowledge of the appraisals associated with guilt in different behavioural contexts. We posit that two emotional appraisal mechanisms are particularly interesting for future marketing research. First, scholars should clarify whether intentionality (i.e. where the perceived deviant behaviour was the outcome of conscious goal pursuit) is necessary to experience guilt. Current accounts from social-psychology present divergent perspectives although it is clear that at least in some contexts intentionality is not necessary (Tracy and Robins 2004). There is however no direct research on this issue in marketing, although some scholars have described consumers' tendency to justify their choices in order to rationalise feelings of guilt (Bray *et al.* 2011; Chatzidakis *et al.* 2006), suggesting that unintentional behaviours could be neutralised even more easily. Current theorizing, however, suggests that consumers can feel guilt even when the behaviour is completely unintentional if they can construe a connection between their own self-image and the outcome of their actions (Tracy and Robins 2007). This means that in certain situations consumers are likely to experience guilt because, even though they have not directly caused the outcome, their self-image could be damaged by it (H6). This hypothesis is important in several marketing contexts. We predict, for example, that if a consumer buys a product without being aware of the unethical practices associated with its production, he or she will experience guilt once such practices become known. This hypothesis, although untested to date, is consistent with research on survivor guilt (Baumeister *et al.* 1994) and unrequited love (Baumeister *et al.* 1993).

Scholars should also research whether guilt is associated with appraisals of certainty. Research that has explored certainty in relation to anger and fear has demonstrated how

appraisals of certainty associated with these emotions influence key features of decision-making such as risk-taking and reward-seeking tendencies (HsiuJu and Shih-Chieh 2008; Tiedens and Linton 2001). No research on certainty and guilt exists to date, although it is possible to argue that, in order to feel guilty about a given behaviour, consumers should deem its outcomes or consequences as certain. In seminal work on appraisal theories, it is argued that certainty is not a necessary appraisal of guilt (e.g. Roseman *et al.* 1996). In circumstances when behaviour is self-caused, however, it seems reasonable to expect that certainty will become associated with guilt experiences. Since guilt is a painful experience, individuals have a tendency to self-protect (Greenwald 1980; Harvey and Weary 1984) which implies that a degree of certainty should be required to experience this emotion. We hypothesise that certainty is part of guilt experiences in those circumstances where the wrongdoing is clearly perceived as self-caused (H7). This is also consistent with research that has stressed the interpersonal nature of guilt (Zeelenberg and Breugelmans 2008). Whenever guilt is motivated by the perception of having caused harm to someone, it is reasonable to assume that certainty will be an appraisal integral to the emotional experience.

Very little research has been dedicated to the analysis of how guilt proneness influences the appraisals of guilt both in terms of reactions to advertising and decision-making. Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2006) found no evidence of the impact of guilt proneness on anticipated guilt. Nonetheless more research is needed to clarify whether this variable has an impact and under what circumstances. Theoretically, it is possible to argue that the tendency to feel guilty might negatively affect the appraisal of guilt appeals because individuals might experience the emotion as too intense and engage in emotion-focused coping (Agrawal and Duhachek 2010). Conversely, it is also possible to reason, consistent with much psychological research, that guilt-proneness might favour the self-regulatory effect of guilt in consumption decisions (Cohen *et al.* 2013; Cohen *et al.* 2011; Tangney and Dearing 2002).

Moreover, evidence collected in several studies show that guilt proneness tends to be positively correlated with measures of self-control, altruism, and honesty and negatively correlated with unethical tendencies (e.g. Cohen *et al.* 2011). This leads us to hypothesize that overall guilt disposition should have a positive effect on the processing of guilt appeals. In other words, we expect that the ‘inverted-U’ relationship discussed above (O’Keefe 2000; Hibbert *et al.* 2007) will not hold for consumers who score highly on guilt proneness. For these consumers, it is reasonable to expect that the higher the intensity of the appeal, the higher its effectiveness.

Another area of research which deserves more attention is the study of how culture influences guilt. Since guilt is a social emotion, based on cognitive processing and strongly influenced by social conventions (Goetz and Keltner 2007), it is surprising that marketers have yet to explore significantly the relative influence of different cultural backgrounds on the experience of guilt and on the behavioural consequences of feeling guilty. This is perhaps due to the fact that no clear consensus exists in the psychological literature, with some arguing that guilt has no universal features (Edelstein and Shaver 2007; Kitayama *et al.* 2006) and others stressing the possibility of developing approaches to the study of this emotion that are consistent across cultures (Goetz and Keltner 2007; Gilbert 2003). This debate offers important implications for multinational marketing campaigns which might employ guilt to persuade and influence consumers. On the basis of the evidence reviewed, we hypothesize that guilt appeals based on regulation failures related to the self (rather than to societal standards or to relationship with others) are processed similarly across different cultural backgrounds (H9). To be sure, we do not argue that a single guilt appeal relating to the self will be necessarily effective across cultures but that it will be processed in a similar way; namely by comparing personal actions with the identity goals it potentially threatens (Tracy and Robins 2007). This hypothesis is consistent with the observation in the literature that the

analysis of guilt across cultures is focused on its social role and on how this emotion supports the coordination of social behaviour (Baumeister *et al.* 1994; Goetz and Keltner 2007). There is no evidence questioning the essential functioning of guilt as a persuasive mechanism at the individual level and therefore no reason to expect that the role of guilt in appeals that involve only the self should be different across cultures.

INSERT TABLE 8 HERE

Moreover, future research should explore the influence of demographic variables such as gender, age and social class on feelings of guilt in different contexts. Work by Orth *et al.* (2010) suggests that individuals tend to experience more guilt as they age, with guilt trait measures reaching a plateau at 70 years of age. This evidence leads us to hypothesize that older consumers are relatively more likely to experience this emotion in marketplace situations and be influenced in their decision by guilt (H10). An additional interesting implication for marketers (and especially social marketers) would be that teenagers are the most resistant group to guilt appeals because of their relative aversion to the experience of this emotion. There is significant evidence that females are more likely to experience guilt than men (Baumeister *et al.* 1994; Else-Quest 2012) and therefore should be more strongly influenced by this emotion in their consumption choices (H11). Although the difference is marginal, it is statistically significant and documented in numerous research contexts (Else-Quest 2012). Although there is no research on social class that can guide us in the development of a research hypothesis, it is possible to speculate that guilt could be experienced as the consequence of belonging to a certain socio-economic group; at least in certain social milieus where social class is an important part of one's identity. This would be

consistent with research on collective guilt (Doosje *et al.* 1998) and “white guilt” (Iyer *et al.* 2003).

There are also two areas of research that emerge as potentially interesting, especially for those wishing to apply marketing to specific business and/or social problems. The first area concerns the exploration of how guilt can be used in marketing to trigger specific cognitions and how these cognitions can influence persuasion. If guilt is associated with certain appraisal patterns (Roseman *et al.* 1990) then this emotion can influence our thoughts as well as our behaviour (Baumeister *et al.* 2007; Pham 2004; Pham 2007). For example, there is a significant amount of research suggesting that guilt is associated with self-efficacy (Duhachek *et al.* 2012). This should mean that feelings of guilt can be used to persuade consumers of their personal efficacy and therefore, somewhat counterintuitively, as an indirect way to build their confidence in a certain area. Future research should explore the cognitive consequences of feelings of guilt and their potential role in persuasion and behavioural change.

Guilt can be caused both by breaches of personal and social norms. Although research has recognised the differences between the two forms of guilt (Dahl *et al.* 2003), little is known about the difference in the experiences that characterise these two different forms of guilt and their consequences for behaviour. Research focusing on normative theory suggests that different patterns of appraisal and emotional experiences could be associated with breaches of *descriptive* and *injunctive* social norms (Cialdini *et al.* 1990; Goldstein *et al.* 2008). It would be interesting to explore this domain further, raising important implications for social marketers aiming to promote responsible behaviour through normative messages (White and Simpson 2013).



## **Conclusion**

Over the last three decades there has been constant interest from marketers in the ability of guilt to promote self-regulation and influence consumers' behaviour. Nonetheless a number of outstanding disputes have affected research on this emotion. This study addresses these issues providing useful insights that inform both future academic research and marketing practice. The identification of the characteristics of guilt, the analysis of its role in persuasion and decision-making processes, the introduction of an elicitation-consumption perspective as well as the development of eleven hypotheses worthy of further exploration provide a platform for future research in the field that should advance our understanding of this emotion and the (in)effective use of guilt in marketing campaigns. This work therefore represents a call to arms to researchers to undertake further research in this important field. How can you possibly refuse?

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## Appendix 1: Summary of the literature

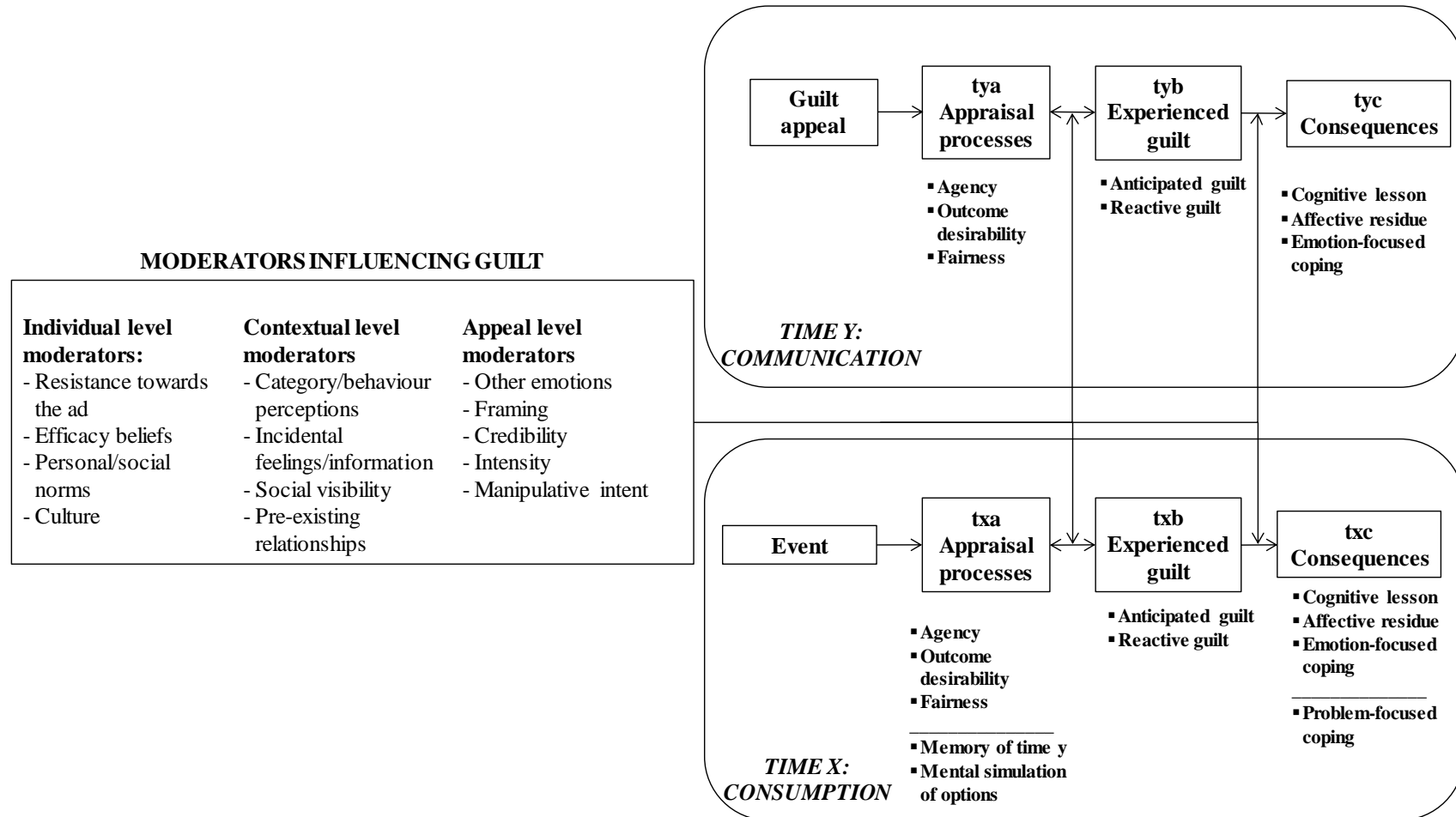


Figure 1: Guilt in marketing: summary of the review

## Appendix 2: An elicitation-consumption perspective

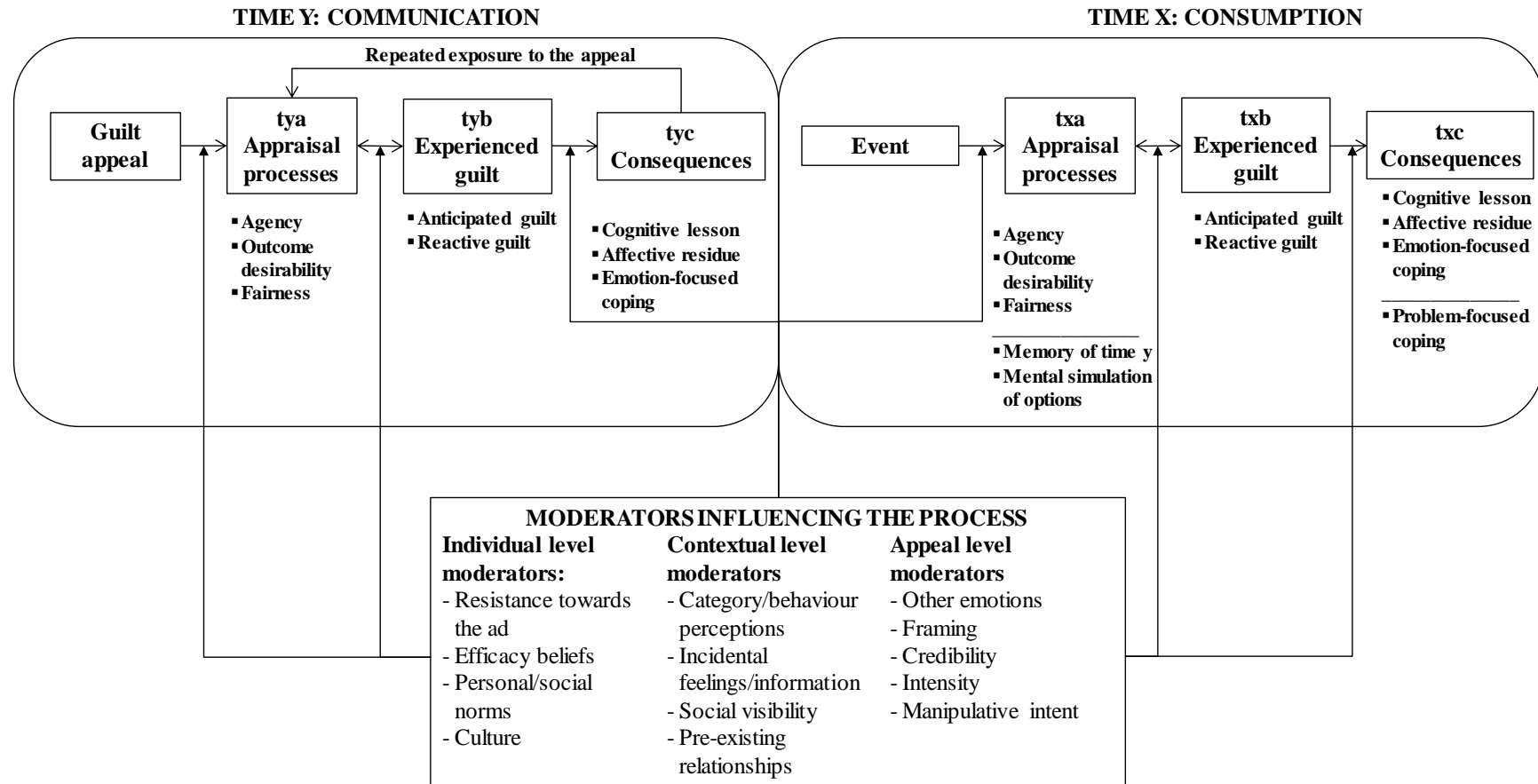
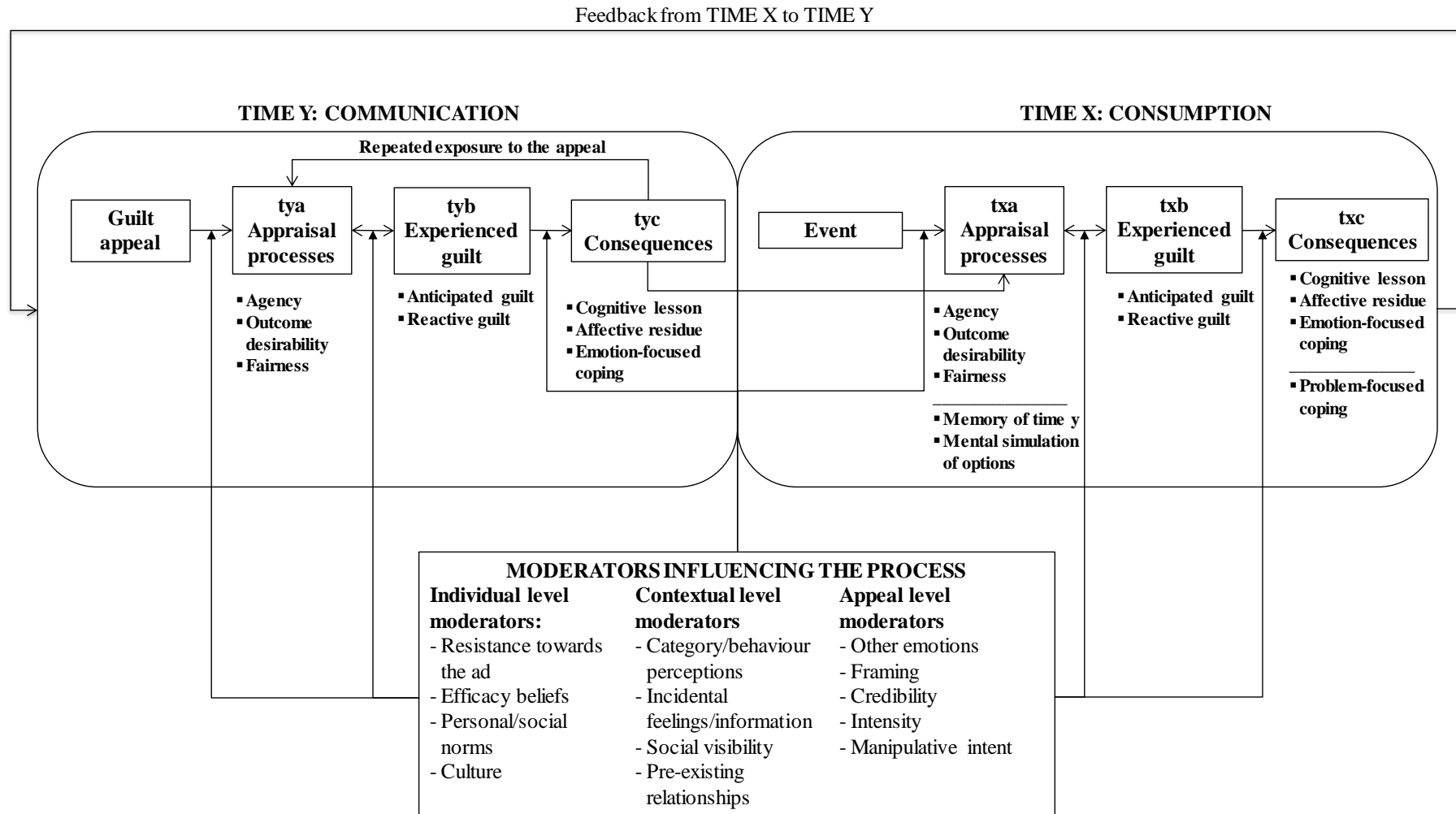
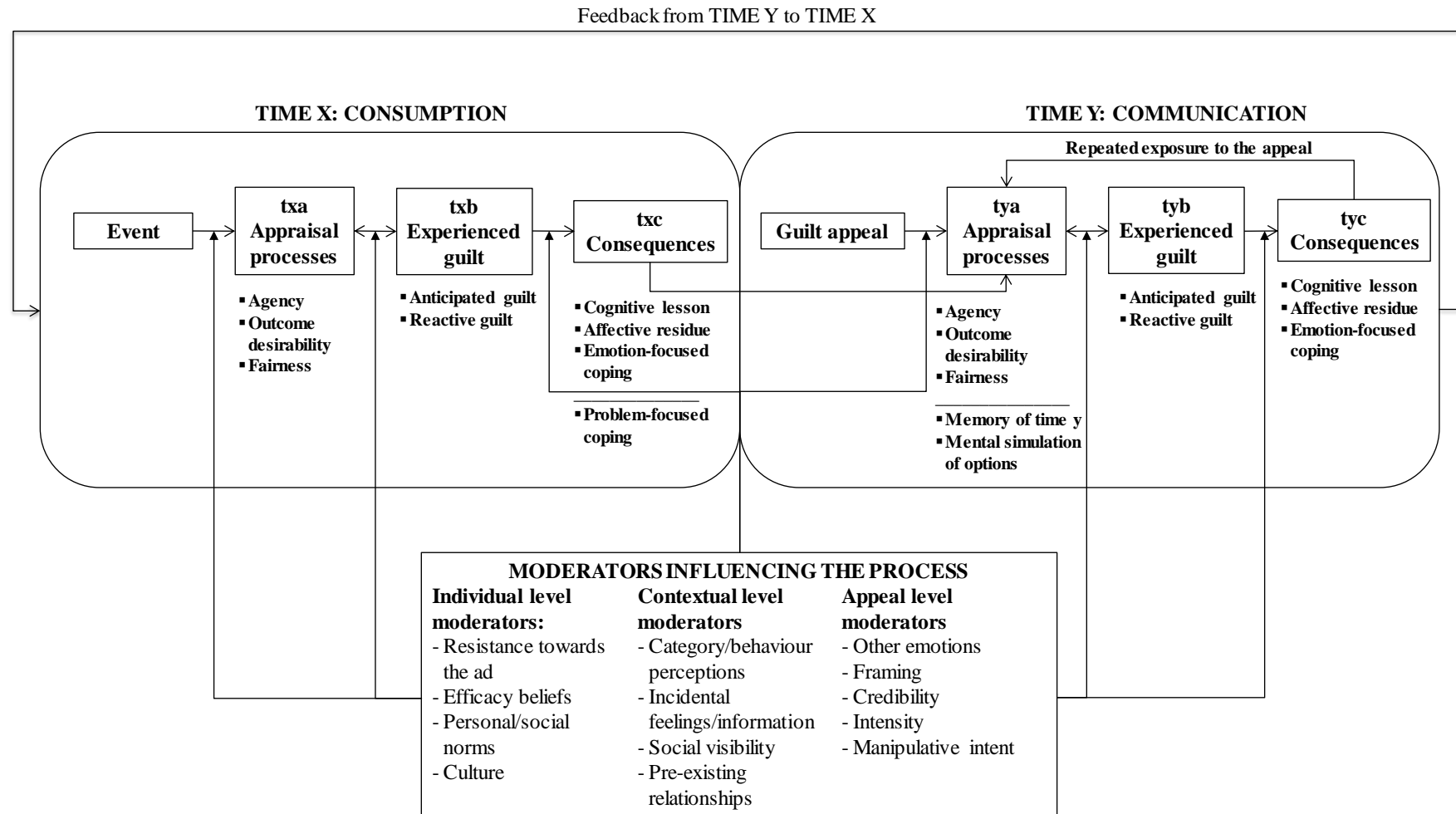


Figure 2: Disintegrated guilt elicitation and consumption processes



**Figure 3: *Integrated elicitation-consumption processes***





**Figure 4: Conditioned elicitation-consumption processes**

### Appendix 3: Managerial implications

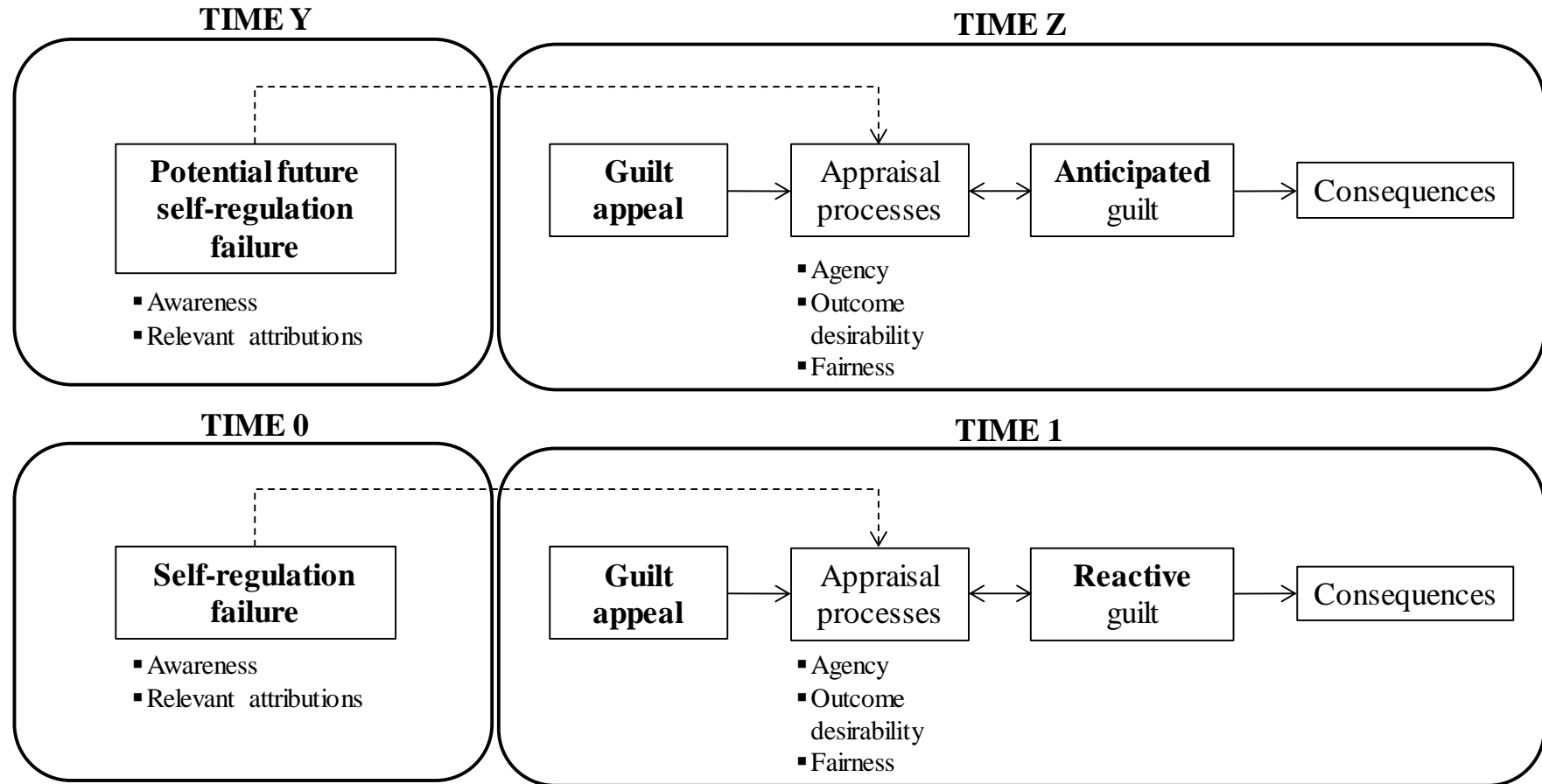
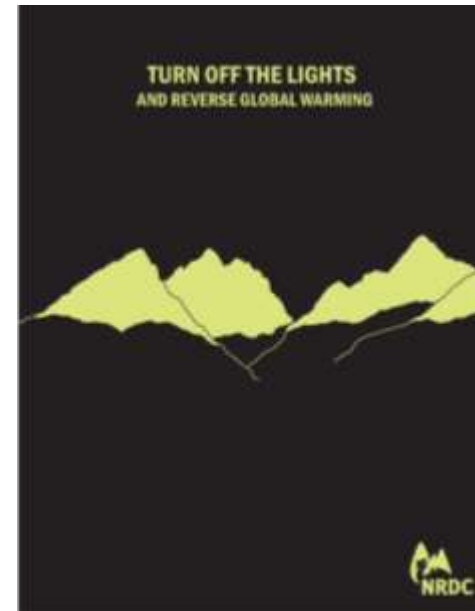


Figure 5: The assumptions of *anticipated* and *reactive* guilt



Assumptions implicit in the campaigns:

- Awareness: consumers' are aware that global warming is caused by their personal actions
- Attributions: consumers' perceive that their self is associated with the negative outcome described

**Figure 6: Examples of two campaigns for anticipated guilt that might violate assumptions related to the appraisal process for this emotion**



☒ You check his helmet.  
☒ You check his training wheels.  
☐ Shouldn't you check the label on his juice?

High fructose corn syrup, sodium benzoate, artificial flavors. Not quite what you were expecting to find, is it? Now take a look at Juicy Juice. All natural 100% juice and Vitamin C. And nothing you can't pronounce. *Because Juicy Juice. The only juice being for the busy, busy kids.*

[www.juicyjuice.com](http://www.juicyjuice.com)



Figure 7: Example of advertisement eliciting reactive guilt

## IMAGE USED IN THE POSTER CAMPAIGN

### TEXT USED IN THE RADIO CAMPAIGN

When he goes to work, I am there.  
At the week-end, I am there.  
On holiday, building sand castles, I am there...beside the sun.  
At night; he tries to forget, but I am always there.  
I am the boy he killed seven years ago 'cos he was speeding. And now he has to live with it.

*Voiceover:* THINK! It's 30 for a reason.

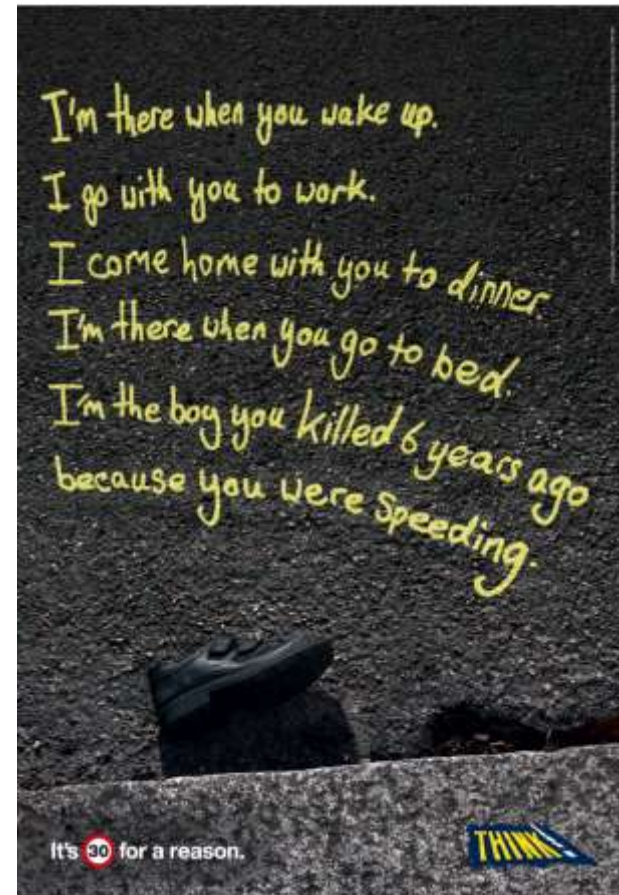
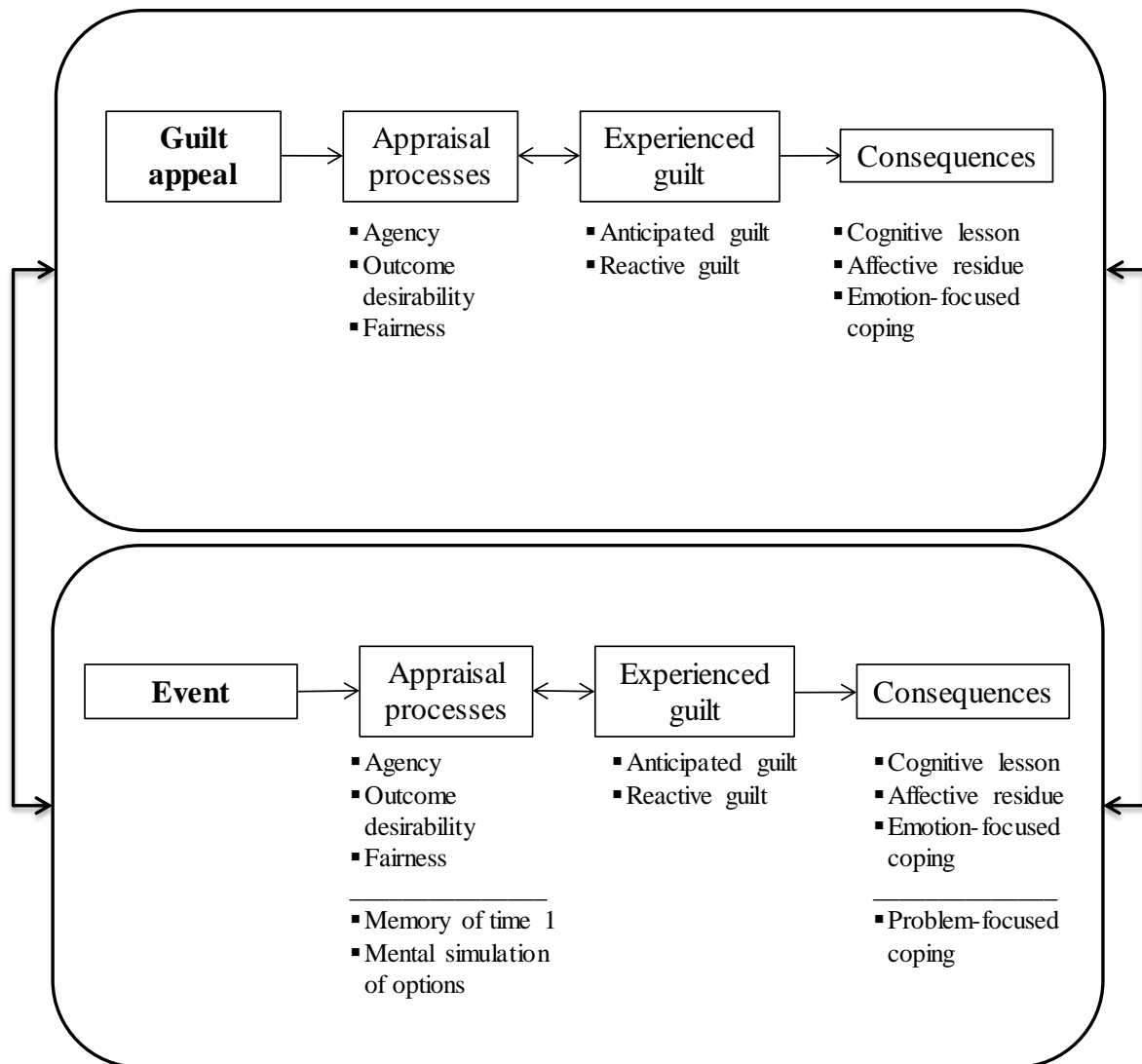


Figure 8: Different campaign planning options when using the 'guilt appeal'



**Figure 9: Persuasion and behavioural change as concurrent processes**

## TABLES

**Table 1: Conceptualizations used in marketing to differentiate between guilt and shame**

Conceptualisation	References	Definition
Self/Behaviour	Cohen (2010); Chun <i>et al.</i> (2007); Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2003); Duhacheck <i>et al.</i> (2012); Soscia (2007); Yi and Baumgartner (2011).	<u>Guilt</u> : a negative emotion determined by the appraisal of negative outcomes caused by personal <b>behaviour</b> <u>Shame</u> : a negative emotion determined by the appraisal of negative outcomes caused by <b>stable personal traits</b>
Private/Public	Agrawal and Duhacheck (2010); Brennan and Binney (2010); Huhmann and Brotherton (1997); Lascu (1991).	<u>Guilt</u> : a negative emotion determined by the <b>private</b> appraisal of negative outcomes caused by personal behaviour <u>Shame</u> : a negative emotion determined by the <b>public</b> appraisal of negative outcomes caused by personal behaviour

**Table 2: Guilt as a self-regulation mechanism: emotional appraisals**

Focus of guilt	Regulatory appraisal pattern explored	Key references
Guilt related to the self	Failure of regulation → Guilt	Chitturi <i>et al.</i> (2007); Cole and Sherrell (1995); Kivetz and Keinan (2006); Kivetz and Simonson (2002); Lee-Wingate and Corfman (2010); Luce <i>et al.</i> (1999); Machleit and Powell (2001); Olsen <i>et al.</i> (2009); Piron (1993); Rook and Hoch (1985); Rook (1987); Soman and Cheema (2011); Soscia (2007); Strahilevitz and Myers (1998).
Guilt related to societal standards	Failure of regulation → Guilt	Chatzidakis <i>et al.</i> (2006); Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2003); Gregory-Smith <i>et al.</i> (2013).
Guilt related to relationship with others	Failure of regulation → Guilt	Carrigan and Szmigin (2006); Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2005); Menon and Dubé (1999); Park <i>et al.</i> (1995); Phillips and Sego (2011); Soman and Cheema (2011).



**Table 3: Guilt as a self-regulation mechanism: consequences of guilt**

Focus of guilt	Regulatory behavioural pattern explored	Key references
Guilt related to the self	Guilt → Behavioural regulation	Agrawal and Duhachek (2010); Chun <i>et al.</i> (2007); Cornish (2012); Duhacheck <i>et al.</i> (2012); Mishra and Mishra (2011); Mohr <i>et al.</i> (2012); Soman and Cheema (2011); Yi and Baumgartner (2011); Zemack-Rugar <i>et al.</i> (2012).
Guilt related to societal standards	Guilt → Behavioural regulation	Braunsberger and Buckler (2011); Carrus <i>et al.</i> (2008); Gregory-Smith <i>et al.</i> (2013); Grob (1995); Kaiser (2006); Kim and Johnson (2013); Klein <i>et al.</i> (2004); Pelozo <i>et al.</i> (2013); Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2005; 2006).
Guilt related to relationship with others	Guilt → Behavioural regulation	Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2005); Soman and Cheema (2011).

**Table 4: Individual level moderators**

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable	Impact	References
<i>GUILT EXPERIENCES</i>	Scepticism towards advertising	▪ Hinders feelings of guilt.	Hibbert <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Pre-existing positive attitudes	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Chang (2012); Hibbert <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Pre-existing beliefs in disagreement with the appeal	▪ Hinder feelings of guilt through the activation of counter-arguing.	Bozinoff and Ghingold (1983); Ghingold and Bozinoff (1982); O'Keefe (2000; 2002)
	Self-efficacy	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2008); Lindsey (2005); Lindsey <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Response-efficacy	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Lindsey (2005); Lindsey <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Personal norms/social norms	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Self-construal	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder feelings of guilt	Block (2005); Kim and Johnson (2013)
	Materialism	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder feelings of guilt	Fitzmaurice (2008)
	Cultural orientation	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder feelings of guilt	Kim and Johnson (2013)
<i>CONSEQUENCES</i>	Self-efficacy	▪ Facilitates problem-focused coping.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2008); Lindsey (2005); Lindsey <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Response-efficacy	▪ Facilitates problem-focused coping.	Lindsey (2005); Lindsey <i>et al.</i> (2007)
	Personal norms/social norms	▪ Facilitates problem-focused coping.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Self-construal	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder problem-focused coping.	Block (2005); Kim and Johnson (2013)
	Materialism	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder problem-focused coping.	Fitzmaurice (2008)
	Cultural orientation	▪ Depending on circumstances can either enhance or hinder problem-focused coping.	Kim and Johnson (2013)

**Table 5: Contextual level moderators**

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable	Impact	References
<i>GUILT EXPERIENCES</i>	Category/product perception for the self	▪ Luxury/hedonic features enhance feelings of guilt.	Chitturi <i>et al.</i> (2007); Lee-Wingate and Corfman (2010)
	Category/product perception for others	▪ Altruistic/other oriented features enhance feelings of guilt.	Agrawal and Duhacheck (2010); Fisher <i>et al.</i> (2008)
	Incidental feelings of guilt	▪ Hinder feelings of guilt.	Agrawal and Duhacheck, (2010)
	Relevant labels/information	▪ Depending on circumstances can either hinder or enhance feelings of guilt.	Mishra and Mishra (2011); Mohr <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Presence of others	▪ Enhances anticipated guilt.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2006); Peloza <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	Priming of self-accountability	▪ Enhances anticipated guilt.	Peloza <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	Perceived personal relationships	▪ Enhance feelings of guilt.	Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2005)
<i>CONSEQUENCES</i>	Incidental feelings of guilt	▪ Hinders problem-focused coping and enhances emotion-focused coping.	Agrawal and Duhacheck, (2010)
	Relevant labels/information	▪ Depending on circumstances can either hinder or enhance problem-focused coping.	Mishra and Mishra (2011); Mohr <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Presence of others	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Basil <i>et al.</i> (2006); Peloza <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	Priming of self-accountability	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Peloza <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	Perceived personal relationships	▪ Enhance problem-focused coping.	Dahl <i>et al.</i> (2005)

**Table 6: Appeal level moderators**

Outcome influenced	Moderator variable	Impact	References
<i>GUILT EXPERIENCES</i>	Perceived threat/benefit for others communicated	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Fisher <i>et al.</i> (2008); Lindsey (2005)
	Others framed as sufferers for the individual's action	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Agrawal and Duhacheck (2010)
	Ambivalence	▪ Enhances feelings of guilt.	Durkin <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Intensity of the appeal	▪ Hinder feelings of guilt through the activation of counter-arguing.	Coulter and Pinto (1995); O'Keefe (2000; 2002)
	Lack of credibility	▪ Hinders feelings of guilt.	Cotte <i>et al.</i> (2005); Coulter <i>et al.</i> (1999)
	Manipulative intent	▪ Hinders feelings of guilt.	Cotte <i>et al.</i> (2005); Coulter <i>et al.</i> (1999)
<i>CONSEQUENCES</i>	Perceived threat/benefit for others communicated	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Fisher <i>et al.</i> (2008); Lindsey (2005)
	Others framed as sufferers for the individual's action	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Agrawal and Duhacheck (2010)
	Ambivalence	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Durkin <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Intensity of the appeal	▪ Enhances emotion-focused coping through the activation of counter-arguing.	Coulter and Pinto (1995); O'Keefe (2000; 2002)
	Issue proximity	▪ Enhances the cognitive lesson extracted from the appeal; ▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Chang (2012)
	'Gain framing' of the message stressing potential benefit that can be obtained by the individual	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Duhacheck <i>et al.</i> (2012)
	Feelings of fear	▪ Enhances problem-focused coping.	Passyn and Sujan (2006)

**Table 7: Guilt pathways in marketing**

<b>Guilt Pathways</b>	<b>Time Y: Communication</b>	<b>Time X: Consumption</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Implications</b>
<i>Integrated</i>	Guilt is experienced	Guilt is experienced	Y precedes X	The memory of guilt feelings elicited by a guilt appeal will influence the appraisal processes in the consumption context.
<i>Conditioned</i>	Guilt is experienced	Guilt is experienced	X precedes Y	The memory of guilt feelings elicited by a consumption episode will influence the appraisal process in the communication context.
<i>Lapsed</i>	Guilt is experienced	Guilt is NOT experienced	-	Despite the elicitation of feelings through a guilt appeal, the emotion is not experienced in a consumption context.
<i>Resisted</i>	Guilt is NOT experienced	Guilt is experienced	-	Despite the experience of guilt in a consumption context, the appeal fails to elicit feelings of guilt.

**Table 8: Agenda for future research**

Topics	Research questions	Research hypotheses	Key references
Memory and feedback	How does the memory of past guilt experiences influence the appraisal of guilt-eliciting events?	H1: Memories of past guilt episodes enhance the experience of this emotion when consumers are presented with guilt-eliciting events.	Amodio <i>et al.</i> (2007); Baumeister <i>et al.</i> (2007); Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2011); Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2013)
		H2: The influence described in H1 is limited to situations where cues embedded in the environment match the same themes stored in memory networks.	Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2011); Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2013)
	What makes guilt appeals more memorable?	H3: Guilt appeals based on themes that are associated with (a lack of) competence, relatedness and autonomy needs are more likely to form episodic memories and hence more likely to be remembered by consumers.	Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2011); Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2013)
		H4: Guilt appeals that relate to autobiographical themes or events are more likely to be remembered by consumers.	Baumgartner <i>et al.</i> (1992); Philippe <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Social categorization: in-group vs. out-group guilt	How does the experience of guilt change depending on the framing of the sufferers of our behaviour?	H5: Guilt is more conducive to problem-focused coping (rather than emotion-focused coping) when the victims of personal wrongdoing are categorized as members of the in-group than when they are categorized as members of the out-group or when they have no clear group identity attached to them.	Agrawal and Duhachek (2010); Gilbert (2003; 2007)
Appraisal processes	What is the relationship between guilt and appraisals of intentionality?	H6: The experience of guilt, in those situations where the consumer can construe the outcomes as reflecting an aspect of his/her self-image, does not require intentionality.	Doosje <i>et al.</i> (1998); Roseman <i>et al.</i> (1996); Tracy and Robins (2007)
	What is the relationship between guilt and appraisals of certainty?	H7: The experience of guilt, in those situations where the emotion is self-caused, is associated with appraisals of certainty.	Tiedens and Linton (2001); Tracy and Robins, (2007); Zeelenberg and Breugelmans (2008)
Guilt disposition	What is the impact of guilt disposition on the processing of guilt appeals?	H8: The moderating effect of the intensity of the appeal does not hold for individuals who score high on guilt disposition measures. In other words, for this group of consumers the effectiveness of the appeal is directly related to its intensity.	Cohen <i>et al.</i> (2013); Cohen <i>et al.</i> (2011); Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2006); Tangney and Dearing (2002)
Culture	How does the effectiveness of guilt appeals change across countries?	H9: Guilt appeals related to the self (rather than to societal standards or to relationship with others) are processed similarly by consumers from different cultures.	Goetz and Keltner (2007); Kitayama <i>et al.</i> (2006); Markus and Kitayama (1991); Tsai <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Demographic variables	How do demographic variables influence the experience of guilt in marketing?	H10: Older consumers are more likely to a) experience guilt in marketing contexts, b) be influenced by this emotion in their decision-making.	Orth <i>et al.</i> (2010)
		H11: Female consumers are more likely to a) experience guilt in marketing contexts, b) be influenced by this emotion in their decision-making.	Baumeister <i>et al.</i> (1994); Else-Quest (2012)